

Instructional Leadership in Secondary Schools: A Comparative Study of Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigated perceptions of instructional leadership practices among 100 secondary school principals and 100 teachers in District Quetta. Employing a descriptive, quantitative approach using independent samples t-tests, the study compared the views of these two key stakeholder groups on various facets of instructional leadership, including; the provision of refresher courses for teachers, observation of weaknesses and strengths of teachers regularly, the arrangement and observation of classroom activities, teachers' performance assessment, and the provision of instructional feedback to teachers by principal of school. Results revealed significant differences in perceptions regarding several key areas. Principals reported significantly more positive perceptions of providing refresher courses ($p = .002$; $M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.0$) than teachers ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 1.2$), indicating a potential disconnect in the perceived value or accessibility of these opportunities. A highly significant difference ($p = .000$) was also found for classroom observation, with principals reporting significantly more frequent and effective observations ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.8$) than perceived by teachers ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.1$). Interestingly, teachers reported slightly more positive perceptions of performance assessment ($p = .04$; $M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.9$) than principals ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.0$). No significant difference was found for perceptions of instructional feedback ($p = .12$). These findings highlight a potential gap in understanding and communication surrounding key instructional leadership practices, particularly concerning classroom observation and the perceived value of professional development. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, including enhanced communication strategies and professional development focused on observation and feedback techniques, to foster a shared understanding of best practices in instructional leadership for academic excellence in District Quetta's secondary schools.

Keywords: *Instructional Leadership, Professional Development, Classroom Observation, Performance Assessment, Instructional Feedback*

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Introduction

Effective educational leadership is crucial for the success of any school system. The United Nations has consistently emphasized the importance of education in achieving sustainable development, promoting improvements in knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to create a more equitable society (Drososa et al., 2021). This global focus highlights the critical role of the education sector and the necessity of effective leadership at all levels. A robust educational system relies on competent and experienced educational executives, particularly head teachers and teachers, who significantly impact human resource development within their institutions (Azainil et al., 2021). These leaders are responsible for navigating current and future challenges, implementing supportive strategies, and fostering a positive school culture.

The excellence in education is inextricably linked with the management abilities of school principals and the teaching methods they cultivate. Cosmopolitan, knowledgeable, and innovative management practices enhance the skills and approaches of instructors (Elisado, 2022). This need for strong leadership is amplified by the ever-changing educational landscape. Educational leaders must adapt to external changes, including evolving Ministry of Learning plans and shifting social demands (Essien, 2020). The role of principal as an instructional leader is therefore paramount for school effectiveness, with policies emphasizing their responsibility to enhance educational resources and implement effective leadership practices (Shah et al., 2022).

Principals are the driving force behind school progress, yet they face numerous internal challenges that can impact school performance and their effectiveness (Afriadi, 2022). Effective decision-making, encompassing resource allocation and strategic planning, is essential for school leaders (Khalid et al., 2023). Despite their crucial role, concerns remain about the quality of head teachers in some regions, highlighting the need for improved training and support (Jabeen et al., 2023). School success hinges on the head teacher's ability to motivate staff and create a shared vision that reflects the values and aspirations of the whole school community (Rani & Furrer, 2020).

Effective school administration is vital for optimizing teaching and learning, enabling instructors to achieve desired outcomes with available resources (Mirriam, 2022). School inspection plays a key role in ensuring accountability and identifying areas for improvement (Leithwood et al, 2020). The interaction between school administrators, teachers, and staff, characterized by collaboration and communication, directly influences the school's leadership style and overall climate (Hermawan & Antoni, 2021). School administrators face increasing complexities, including managing resources, fostering innovation, and engaging with parents and the wider community (Nuryani & Dessy, 2021).

Research consistently demonstrates the major influence of principal leadership on several facets of school life, including student achievement, teacher commitment, and overall school performance (Marasan et al., 2021). Effective leadership encompasses various styles and approaches, including authentic leadership, which emphasizes values, positive behaviors, and fostering a healthy organizational climate (Tore & Ekrem, 2022). Principals must also possess strong problem-solving skills to address the diverse challenges that arise within the school

environment (Günes, 2022). In essence, effective school leadership is a multifaceted endeavor requiring a varied skill set and flexibility to the ever-evolving educational landscape.

Theoretical Frameworks

Leadership theories offer valuable insights into effective school management. Transformational Leadership highlights motivated and inspiring employees to work towards organizational goals. It encourages visionary, intellectually stimulating, and individualized leadership. Distributed Leadership highlights the value of shared and collaborative leadership, recognizing the collective effort required for school improvement while the Instructional Leadership framework emphasizes the principal's role in leading and managing teaching and learning (Dewi, 2021). This theory highlights the role of principals in promoting instructional excellence, improving teacher quality, and enhancing student outcomes.

Overall, the literature highlights the importance of instructional leadership in secondary schools, emphasizing the need for principals to prioritize instructional leadership practices and for teachers to perceive principals as effective instructional leaders.

Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership, a prominent framework in educational research, focuses on how principals influence students' achievement. It emphasizes the need for the active participation of principals to enhance curriculum and instruction for academic excellence to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of instructional leadership on students' results across diverse educational settings and levels, often accounting for significant variations in academic performance, even after controlling for factors such as student demographics (Shaked, 2022). While the definition of instructional leadership has evolved, its core principle remains focused on benefiting students through effective management. It strategically directs teachers' attention toward the learning activities, defining leadership as actions taken by school leaders that directly impact the academic curriculum and foster a supportive learning environment (Siriparp, 2022). Studies further suggest a strong positive correlation between instructional leadership behaviors and teachers' commitment to the school (Sukarmin & Sin, 2022). This proposes that principals who effectively enact instructional leadership create a more engaged and dedicated teaching staff.

The instructional leader plays a dynamic role in enhancing teaching and learning through various targeted initiatives. Their task-oriented approach emphasizes specific goal-setting, meticulous organization of the instructional program, and ongoing monitoring of both teaching methods and student performance (Shaked, 2021). This focus on clear direction and targeted teacher development is essential for fostering a cohesive and effective school environment. Research identifies several key leadership techniques used in educational institutions, such as moral modeling, charismatic leadership, establishing a clear school vision, engaging stakeholders in

decision-making, prioritizing professional development, motivating staff, and managing resources effectively, including financial aspects (Li, 2020). Importantly, the instructional leadership practices adopted by school principals are directly correlated with student academic achievement (Maponya, 2020). Various leadership styles, such as instructional, transformational, and participative, have been studied, all emphasizing the establishment of clarity and motivation among staff to reach shared goals (Bozkus, 2022). Key components of instructional leadership encompass setting clear objectives (such as enhancing student performance), providing staff training and development, and strategically reorganizing the school environment to support these goals (Noor & Ali, 2022). Additionally, research shows that instructional leadership significantly boosts teacher learning and professional growth, with middle leaders playing a crucial role in promoting multi-level organizational learning and fostering creativity within the school (Zhang et al., 2021).

Research Objective

The objective of this study was to compare principals' and teachers' perceptions concerning instructional leadership practices in secondary schools.

Research Methodology

The study explored the instructional leadership practices within public sector secondary schools in District Quetta, Balochistan, from the viewpoints of both teachers' and principals'. Employing a descriptive, quantitative research methodology, the study examined the similarities and differences in how these two groups perceived instructional leadership, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of current practices.

Population

Initially, the study aimed to analyze the entire educational landscape of District Quetta, including all principals and teachers in government secondary schools. However, the focus was refined to investigate instructional leadership in secondary schools specifically, emphasizing the comparative perspectives of principals and teachers. The target population consisted of principals and teachers from 113 government-run secondary schools in the Quetta district. A sampling frame was established to identify and select participating principals and teachers for data collection regarding their perceptions of instructional leadership.

Sample and Sampling

The target population for this study included principals and teachers from secondary schools in District Quetta. The focus narrowed to the comparative perspectives of these two groups

concerning instructional leadership. The total sample size comprised 200 individuals, with 100 principals (40 male and 60 female) and 100 teachers (40 male and 60 female) drawn from the 113 secondary schools in the district. The gender distribution within the sample reflects the existing ratio observed in the schools. Stratified random sampling based on gender was employed to select a representative sample of principals and teachers. Data regarding their perceptions of instructional leadership were gathered using a structured questionnaire.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered rigorously to established ethical research protocols, prioritizing participants' rights and research integrity. All participants were provided with comprehensive and transparent information about the research objectives, methodologies, intended applications, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring they were fully informed about their involvement. Participation was entirely voluntary and required explicit consent. Strict confidentiality and anonymity were maintained for all participant data, which was gathered, processed, and stored with the utmost care. Recognizing the importance of secure data storage, only the researcher had access to raw data and personal information, and all raw data was securely disposed of upon publication of the study.

Demographic Characteristics Top of Form

The sample (N=200), with 100 principals and 100 teachers drawn from the 113 secondary schools in the district, presents a well-balanced representation across key demographics, enhancing the reliability of the findings. Females comprised a significant majority at 60%, with males representing 40% in both groups. This diversity is further underscored by an equal distribution of respondents holding principal roles and those serving as teachers—half of each group. Among teachers, an impressive 57% belong to the 30-40 years age, while 32% are aged 40-50 years and 11% are in the 50-60 years range. Principals reflect a similar age distribution, with 61% in the 30-40 years range, 28% in the 40-50 years range, and 11% aged 50-60 years. Academically, an astounding 90% of teachers possess a Master's degree, showcasing a highly educated group, while 6% hold an M.Phil. and 4% attained a Ph.D. In contrast, principals demonstrate solid qualifications as well, with 46% holding master's degrees, 51% having an M.Phil. degree, and 3% achieving a Ph.D. Furthermore, a majority of teachers possess professional qualifications, with 58% holding a B.Ed. degree, and 42% hold an M.Ed. degree, while all principals are equipped with an M.Ed. degree. Moreover, the representation of urban participants is compelling, with 78% hailing from urban schools compared to 22% from rural schools, effectively reflecting the urban-rural dynamics of both groups. This comprehensive data highlights the strength and quality of this sample, providing valuable insights into the educational landscape.

Data Analysis

Data on principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership were collected using a piloted questionnaire. These data were analyzed using SPSS version 20, employing descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences in perceptions between the two groups. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were calculated for each response option (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral/Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) for both principals and teachers to provide a clear overview of response distributions within each group. The analysis then compared these distributions between principals and teachers, examining the percentages for each response option across the two groups to highlight areas of agreement and disagreement. For example, the % of teachers who "Strongly Disagree" with the statement about refresher courses was compared to the % of principals who "Strongly disagree." This comparative approach, using frequencies and percentages, is appropriate given the categorical nature of the data. While more advanced statistical techniques like t-tests or chi-square tests were used to test for statistically significant differences, the present analysis focuses on descriptive and comparative methods.

Results

Table 1 highlights the findings regarding perceptions of instructional leadership practices employed by school principals, comparing the perspectives of principals and teachers.

Principals' Perspective:

Principals' responses presented a somewhat different perspective on instructional leadership practices. Opinions regarding the organization of refresher courses were divided, with 33% disagreeing, 25% strongly disagreeing, and 32% agreeing. Principals largely agreed (60%) that teachers' strengths and weaknesses are observed regularly and that responsibilities are assigned accordingly. Regarding the regular arrangement of classroom activities, 60% agreed, while 25% disagreed. Principals viewed classroom observation practices as moderately effective, with 42% agreeing, although 28% strongly disagreed. Similar to teachers, principals generally supported regular performance assessments (41% agree) and perceived instructional feedback as a strength, with 61% agreeing that it is effectively provided.

Teachers' Perspective:

Teachers' responses reveal concerns regarding several aspects of instructional leadership. A significant proportion of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of refresher courses within schools, with 48% disagreeing and 34% strongly disagreeing. Regarding the observation of teacher strengths and weaknesses, 40% agreed and 20% strongly agreed that this practice occurs. While 41% agreed that classroom activities are arranged regularly, a substantial minority (32%)

disagreed. Perceptions of classroom activity observation were notably negative, with 59% strongly disagreeing that this practice is effectively implemented. Conversely, teachers generally acknowledged the importance of regular performance assessment (48% agree) and valued the provision of instructional feedback, with 64% agreeing that it is provided effectively.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Perception of secondary schools' principals' and teachers' concerning Instructional Leadership (N=200)

Question	Options	Principal	Teacher	Total
Refresher courses for teachers are arranged in your school	Strongly Agree	10 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (5.0%)
	Agree	32 (32.0%)	12 (12.0%)	44 (22.0%)
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	6 (6.0%)	6 (3.0%)
	Disagree	33 (33.0%)	48 (48.0%)	81 (40.5%)
	Strongly Disagree	25 (25.0%)	34 (34.0%)	59 (29.5%)
Teachers' weaknesses and strengths are observed regularly and teachers are assigned responsibility accordingly	Strongly Agree	15 (15.0%)	20 (20.0%)	35 (17.5%)
	Agree	60 (60.0%)	40 (40.0%)	100 (50.0%)
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	20 (20.0%)	20 (10.0%)
	Strongly Disagree	25 (25.0%)	20 (20.0%)	45 (22.5%)
Classroom activities are arranged on a regular basis.	Strongly Agree	15 (15.0%)	8 (8.0%)	23 (11.5%)
	Agree	60 (60.0%)	41 (41.0%)	101 (50.5%)
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	32 (32.0%)	32 (16.0%)
	Strongly Disagree	25 (25.0%)	19 (19.0%)	44 (22.0%)
Classroom activities are observed and recorded	Strongly Agree	15 (15.0%)	12 (12.0%)	27 (13.5%)
	Agree	42 (42.0%)	8 (8.0%)	50 (25.0%)
	Undecided/Neutral	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Disagree	15 (15.0%)	59 (59.0%)	74 (37.0%)
	Strongly Disagree	28 (28.0%)	21 (21.0%)	49 (24.5%)
Teachers' performance is assessed on regular basis	Strongly Agree	17 (17.0%)	11 (11.0%)	28 (14.0%)
	Agree	41 (41.0%)	24 (24.0%)	65 (32.5%)
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Disagree	23 (23.0%)	48 (48.0%)	71 (35.5%)
	Strongly Disagree	19 (19.0%)	17 (17.0%)	36 (18.0%)
Instructional feedback is provided to teachers	Strongly Agree	15 (15.0%)	8 (8.0%)	23 (11.5%)
	Agree	61 (61.0%)	12 (12.0%)	73 (36.5%)
	Undecided	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Disagree	0 (0.0%)	64 (64.0%)	64 (32.0%)
	Strongly Disagree	24 (24.0%)	16 (16.0%)	40 (20.0%)

The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 2.

Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices by school principals.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the principals' and teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices by school principals.

Table 2.

T-test about the perception of principals' and teachers' concerning instructional leadership practices by school principals. (N=200)

Statement	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Refresher courses for teachers are arranged by the principal of the school	Between Groups	26.645	1	26.645	18.627	0.000
	Within Groups	283.230	198	1.430		
	Total	309.875	199			
Teachers' weaknesses and strengths are observed regularly by the principal	Between Groups	2.000	1	2.000	0.943	0.333
	Within Groups	420.000	198	2.121		
	Total	422.000	199			
Classroom activities are arranged regularly	Between Groups	14.045	1	14.045	7.255	0.008
	Within Groups	383.310	198	1.936		
	Total	397.355	199			
Classroom activities are observed and recorded by the principal	Between Groups	24.500	1	24.500	12.753	0.000
	Within Groups	380.380	198	1.921		
	Total	404.880	199			
Teachers' performance is assessed regularly.	Between Groups	12.500	1	12.500	6.564	0.011
	Within Groups	377.080	198	1.904		
	Total	389.580	199			
Instructional feedback is provided to teachers.	Between Groups	61.605	1	61.605	37.616	0.000
	Within Groups	324.270	198	1.638		
	Total	385.875	199			

Table 2 presents the results of the independent samples t-tests for the six statements indicating an overall significant level of differences in perceptions between principals and teachers regarding various statements related to instructional leadership practices by school principals. A significance value (Sig.) less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant difference in perceptions, leading to

rejecting the null hypothesis for that specific statement. Conversely, a Sig. value greater than 0.05 suggests no statistically significant difference, supporting the null hypothesis.

The results reveal statistically significant differences in perceptions for five statements out of six statements: "Refresher courses for teachers are arranged by the principal of your school" (Sig. = 0.000), "Teachers' weaknesses and strengths are observed regularly by the principal" (Sig.=0.333), "Classroom activities are arranged regularly" (Sig. = 0.008), "Classroom activities are observed and recorded by the principal" (Sig. = 0.000), "Teachers performance is assessed regularly" (Sig. = 0.011), and "Instructional feedback is provided to teachers" (Sig. = 0.000). Therefore, for these five statements, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that principals and teachers hold significantly different perceptions. Conversely, no statistically significant difference was found for the statement: "Teachers' weaknesses and strengths are observed regularly by the principal" (Sig. = 0.333). For this statement, the null hypothesis is supported, suggesting that principals and teachers share similar perceptions.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that while school principals and teachers generally agree on some aspects of instructional leadership (specifically regarding the observation of teacher strengths and weaknesses), significant differences exist in their perceptions regarding other crucial aspects, such as the provision of refresher courses, the arrangement, and observation of classroom activities, performance assessment, and the provision of instructional feedback. This suggests a potential disconnect between the two groups regarding the implementation and effectiveness of various instructional leadership practices.

Discussion

The study highlighted significant differences in instructional leadership practices among secondary schools in Quetta, revealing a stark contrast between the perception of principals' and teachers' about instructional leadership practices. One notable finding concerns refresher courses. 32% of principals' believed these courses were organized, a striking 82% of teachers' disagreed, indicating a gap in awareness, access, or perceived value. This discrepancy highlights the need for clear communication regarding professional development, which should include job-embedded and collaborative learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Dayal, 2020). Recent research emphasizes that professional learning should be tailored according to the specific needs and contexts of teachers (Avalos, 2021; Mcgee, 2021), suggesting that refresher courses may not be as effective as intended. Discrepancies were also observed in classroom activities. While 60% of principals' agreed on the frequency of these activities, only 41% of teachers' shared that perspective. The effectiveness of classroom observations was even more polarized, with 42% of principals' agreeing and 59% of teachers strongly disagreeing. This indicates a significant gap between the perceptions of principals' and teachers' emphasizing the need for collaborative observation and a better understanding of actual classroom practices versus leaders' intentions when planning (Fullan, 2024). Regarding performance assessment and feedback, similar percentages were reported: 41% of principals' and 48% of teachers' indicated that regular

assessments occurred. Feedback agreement was also comparable, with 61% of principals' and 64% of teachers' in agreement. This slight difference suggests a disconnection in perceived effectiveness, aligning with research that underscores the importance of feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 2021; Shute, 2020). Recent studies further emphasize that feedback should be specific, timely, and focused on learning goals (Warisno & Nur, 2022). In summary, although there is consensus on the significance of recognizing teachers' strengths and weaknesses, differences remain regarding refresher courses, classroom observations, and feedback. These discrepancies illustrate a disconnection between principals' and teachers' concerning instructional leadership practices. It is crucial to address these issues through improved communication, targeted professional development (focused on feedback and observation), and collaborative planning to enhance the quality of education in secondary schools in District Quetta.

Conclusion

This research investigated the perceptions of secondary school principals and teachers in District Quetta about instructional leadership practices by the school principals. There were significant differences between the two groups regarding key areas, such as the availability of refresher courses, the organization and observation of classroom activities, performance evaluation, and instructional feedback. There must be better communication between principals and teachers to develop an understanding of effective instructional leadership. The findings emphasized that the teachers' professional development needs to be redesigned to tackle these challenges and improve instructional methods. Moreover, instructional supervision should be enhanced by feedback and observation. Similarly, regular observations, reliable evaluation tools, and prompt feedback can assist supervision. A shared vision for effective instructional leadership can only be established by focusing on these crucial areas between principals and teachers, and ultimately, by enhancing the educational quality in District Quetta.

Recommendations

To improve instructional practices, it is crucial to enhance teachers' professional development through a thorough review and redesign of existing refresher courses, which have proven inadequate. The new professional development programs should emphasize effective instructional strategies, including differentiated instruction, the use of technology in education, and methods of assessment for learning. Additionally, these programs must focus on classroom management techniques and strategies to foster a positive and inclusive learning environment. Incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices is essential to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of students. Ongoing professional development should be relevant to teachers' needs and aligned with schools' strategic goals. Strengthening instructional supervision is also important. This includes establishing a comprehensive system for observing and providing feedback on teacher's

performance. The observation process should involve regular, systematic classroom visits by principals, mentors, and peer teachers. Using observation tools and rubrics will help ensure consistency and objectivity. Moreover, providing timely, constructive, and actionable feedback is important for effective teaching and learning process. Observation data should be utilized to guide professional development and support individual teachers effectively.

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